

Recommendations

This section summarizes the recommendations identified by Steering Committee members of the Seattle-King County HIV/AIDS housing needs assessment and planning process.

The Steering Committee for the Seattle-King County HIV/AIDS housing needs assessment and planning process met on June 30, 2004 to develop recommendations to address the critical issues identified through the needs assessment. This meeting was the culmination of a six-month community-based planning process addressing the housing needs of people living with HIV/AIDS in this region. The recommendations developed by the committee will assist AIDS housing stakeholders and funders to meet the increasing requests for housing assistance by people living with HIV/AIDS.

The recommendations relate to AIDS housing eligibility criteria and serving people with complex lives and provide a first step in implementing the *2004 Seattle-King County HIV/AIDS Housing Plan*. The City of Seattle Human Services Department will convene separate time-limited work groups charged with developing detailed implementation plans for each of the four recommendations:

- **Change the eligibility criteria for transitional and permanent housing** within the AIDS housing continuum managed by Lifelong AIDS Alliance to include persons with an AIDS diagnosis and a household income of 30 percent or less of local MFI.
- **Expand appropriate housing and service opportunities** for people living with HIV/AIDS, particularly those with multiple diagnoses, by coordinating and integrating community housing and service funding.
- **Augment resources available through the AIDS housing system** by effectively collaborating with mainstream public and private housing providers; strengthen relationships with existing partners.
- **Ensure that every person** placed in transitional and permanent housing through the AIDS housing system **has the basic life skills to successfully maintain housing stability.**

Each of these recommendations, along with related action steps, is presented below.

AIDS Housing Eligibility Criteria

The AIDS housing system was originally designed to provide housing to individuals and families affected by AIDS who were “most in need” for health reasons and were thus unable to wait for assistance available through other housing providers in the community. When dedicated federal AIDS housing and service funding became available in the 1990s, these resources helped build a significant continuum of housing assistance in King County dedicated for people living with HIV/AIDS. Throughout the planning process, Steering Committee members grappled with overarching issues related to the changing nature of HIV and AIDS, populations seeking services for more complex issues, and the shifting definition of those most in need.

The eligibility criteria for AIDS-dedicated housing has been revisited in each of the last three HIV/AIDS housing needs assessments in King County. Currently, access to transitional and permanent housing resources through Lifelong AIDS Alliance requires a doctor's certified AIDS disability and household income at or below 50 percent of local Median Family Income (MFI). Emergency financial and housing assistance (egrants and motel vouchers) are available to all persons with HIV and AIDS, and funded primarily by the Ryan White Program. Past AIDS housing plans have recommended that those criteria remain in place. At the conclusion of the 2004 needs assessment, the committee determined that defining need today includes consideration of not only medical and health status, but also physical and behavioral challenges and complex life circumstances.

Taking into consideration input collected from consumers and providers across the community, the Steering Committee decided to address a core question raised throughout the needs assessment and planning process: What eligibility criteria should be put in place for housing assistance within the AIDS housing system? (Some of the other questions that arose through the needs assessment process included: Who can the current continuum serve? Is the existing housing delivery model appropriate and effective? Does the community continue to need a separate AIDS housing system? What defines the population of people living with HIV/AIDS who are most in need in 2004?)

Steering Committee members maintained consensus on the continued priority to respond to individuals and families who would most benefit from the resources in the AIDS housing system and recommended changes to the eligibility criteria that would support that priority.

Recommendation

Change the eligibility criteria for transitional and permanent housing within the AIDS housing continuum managed by Lifelong AIDS Alliance to include persons with an AIDS diagnosis and a household income of 30 percent or less of local MFI.

Action Steps

- Ask the AIDS Housing Committee to identify and undertake implementation steps.
- Implement new criteria by January 1, 2005 for HOPWA and March 1, 2005 for the Ryan White Program.
- Provide sufficient notice prior to implementation of these changes to key stakeholders including consumers, housing providers, case managers, community partners, and the Ryan White Planning Council.
- Train staff at provider agencies on the new criteria and documentation processes.
- Assess impact of changes on consumers and the AIDS housing system at six-month intervals; establish a baseline from current housing waiting list data available from Lifelong AIDS Alliance.
- Based on results of the assessment, further identify need for and impact of extending eligibility for transitional and permanent housing to persons with HIV and consider implementing a tiered eligibility criteria that incorporates both HIV status and broader definitions of need.

Serving People with Complex Lives

Housing people with complex lives presents significant challenges for HIV/AIDS and affordable housing providers. Mental illness, substance use, physical disabilities, limited life skills, very low incomes, and a history of incarceration were repeatedly raised as barriers to housing access and stability. Ongoing case management, services, and social support were identified as necessary components and critical gaps. As nonprofit housing providers partner with the AIDS system to house people living with HIV/AIDS with increasingly complex health and life challenges, gaps in these services are increasingly problematic.

The following four recommendations focus on meeting the increasingly diverse needs of people living with HIV/AIDS through enhancing the dedicated housing system, leveraging resources, creating partnerships, and integrating and expanding services to better support populations currently in AIDS housing and those needing housing.

Recommendation

Expand appropriate housing and service opportunities for people living with HIV/AIDS, particularly those with multiple diagnoses, by coordinating and integrating community housing and service funding.

Action Steps

- Increase coordination and information flow with other planning efforts across the community to ensure that people living with HIV/AIDS are represented; designate representatives and ensure feedback mechanisms. Examples of current processes include: Ryan White Planning Council, City of Seattle Consolidated Plan, King County Consolidated Plan, Continuum of Care, the King County Plan to End Homelessness, Healthcare for the Homeless, and Taking Health Care Home.
- Participate in and coordinate with ongoing systems integration efforts targeting hard-to-serve consumers.
- Coordinate with and initiate model pilot programs and planning processes across the community that are designed to support consumers with multiple diagnoses.
- Initiate a strategic planning process involving HOPWA and Ryan White program stakeholders aimed at utilizing AIDS-dedicated resources most effectively to meet the needs of people with multiple diagnoses.
- Work with the Department of Corrections and other community stakeholders to develop community-wide housing strategies to meet the needs of people with a history of incarceration.

Recommendation

Augment resources available through the AIDS housing system by effectively collaborating with mainstream public and private housing providers; strengthen relationships with existing partners.

Action Steps

- Commit dedicated staffing to provide timely and appropriate placement and adequate follow-up to people living in permanent housing through the HIV/AIDS system, with an emphasis on serving those placed in housing through partnerships with mainstream housing providers.
- Develop and grow a centralized system of available and affordable private and nonprofit housing resources to ensure availability of information across the community; commit 12 months of funding to further expand the housing website under construction by Lifelong AIDS Alliance; secure long-term private or public funding for the continuation of the housing information system.
- Identify and fully utilize funding resources available to people with a history of incarceration available through the Department of Corrections and other community sources.
- Use existing housing and service funding from other systems to better serve people living with HIV/AIDS.
- Prioritize and leverage capital dollars for set-aside units for people living with AIDS in community-based supportive housing developments.

Recommendation

Institute appropriate service opportunities for people living with HIV/AIDS, especially those with multiple diagnoses, through formal collaborations, training, and service delivery linkages.

Action Steps

- Work with other housing and service systems, particularly mental health, to develop formal linkages and operating agreements.
- Ensure that every person eligible for case management in another system (e.g., mental health, aging and disability, youth services, veterans) is enrolled in that system.
- Conduct at least one community-wide training about housing issues for people living with HIV/AIDS within the next twelve months for staff from other service and housing systems.
- Enhance consumer self-advocacy skills through formal training and knowledge-building experiences.
- Develop uniform baseline skills and practice knowledge among all HIV/AIDS case managers and housing advocates about diverse populations and resources available through other housing and service systems.

Recommendation

Ensure that every person placed in transitional and permanent housing through the AIDS housing system has the basic life skills to successfully maintain housing stability.

Action Steps

- Identify promising practices for life skills development training.
- Develop capacity within the AIDS housing system to manage and deliver life skills training.
- Assess the need of each transitional and permanent housing applicant for life skills training.
- Implement life skills training requirement in transitional housing programs for residents in need of additional skills.
- Provide ongoing life skills training for residents in all housing programs from emergency to permanent.